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Assistant Secretary of State (1909-1913)

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Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Philander C. Knox, July 19, 1910

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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July 19, 1910.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Ex-Governor Franklin Murphy telegraphs "Unable to accept appointment to Mexico, have written", - which leaves a vacancy. All the others have received their appointments and seem to have accepted. We must notify Mexico in a few days of the final delegation, so I hope you can let us know who is to fill the vacancy and whether his wife will accompany him.

Herewith copy of my letter of July 13th to the Chilean Chargé d'Affaires. This, I think, completes your dossier on the Peru-Ecuador mediation as it now stands.

Please note the enclosed corrected copy of Mr. Straus' telegram of the 15th on the attitude of the Russian Embassy towards our railway concession in Turkey. It looks as if, having only sought their neutrality, we might end by gaining their support.

Have you any objection to the transfer of de Billier from Teheran to Athens? De Billier's family have been ill at Teheran and also Mr. Russell, who seems to function thus far in a decidedly eccentric manner, does not want to
this
give the Secretary of Legation a look in at all, and a change in the secretaryship seems rather desirable.

I enclose copies of the following which seem of sufficient interest for you to read:- Mr. Moffat's despatches of June 30th and June 27th on Pittman and the capture of Prinzapolca and showing the American interests at that place; Mr. Henry Lane Wilson's despatch of July 12th recommending San Jose as preferable to Cartago for the Central American Peace Court (unless Costa Rica shows the United States more friendship Washington or the Canal Zone might be a more neutral and more appropriate spot); Mr. Johnson's, Consul at Corinto, despatches of June 27th and 28th showing a half-hearted and cooked up anti-Americanism on the west coast of Nicaragua.

The Estrada Consul at New Orleans has telegraphed Doctor Castrillo the following:

"New Orleans, July 16. The Norwegian Government ordered its captains not to go any more to Bluefields. This appears to be at the instigation of Germany. See the Department and if you can get a guarantee from the American Government to protect the interests of Norwegian ships in order that we shall be able to continue to have communication; otherwise we are out off because it is not possible to secure other ships than Norwegian."

We have had telegrams from four or five American firms and two from the Bluefields' Steamship Company,

all

all urging that we try to get the Norwegian Government to modify its orders to Norwegian ships to respect the VENUS blockade. The Bluefields Steamship people are agitated about the loading of their bananas, but we have so many indications that they enjoy a Zelaya concession and have sustained the Madriz faction that we think their clamor may be ^a bluff to try to hide their real sympathies, and we rather feel anyhow a little delay in the loading of a few bananas will not hurt them. The other phase is that the population of Bluefields and the American miners and planters down there need these ships to bring their supplies. It is a pretty ship subsidy argument that there is nothing of American registry to do the work! I should not be surprised if our old declaration that we would not permit the seizure of American owned ships or cargoes together with our attitude of not allowing the VENUS to interfere with American vessels or cargoes by way of blockade might be made to afford the necessary protection. So far as our law is concerned the Norwegian ships could fly the American flag if they are under American charter except when they are in an American port. I recall *that* at the time ~~when~~ you considered extending the benefit of our attitude towards the VENUS to foreign shipping and cargoes, -

cargoes,- if the above alternative does not work out we could still do this and get the Norwegian order recalled. Mr. Clark and I are still studying this question.

Herewith a draft reply to Wright. I fancy you would not care to correspond personally with him. Does it meet your views? Wright is such a bounder and such a disagreeable character that it is difficult to resist the opportunity to get rid of him now. The only reasons against it seem to me; first, the talking against the Department he would do and, second, the fact that he has done a lot of work and may be useful through the impending Conference, although as to this last consideration I have no doubt and neither has Mr. Miller that Mr. Heintzleman could do the work. If Wright comes to his senses what do you think of having the ultimate commission consist of Bishop Brent, Chairman; Professor Jenks, Commissioner; Doctor Wright, Technical Delegate, and Mr. Heintzleman and Mr. Huidkoper (an intelligent but boring young gentleman in whom the President is rather interested) as secretaries?

A letter addressed to you by the Acting Secretary of the Treasury says:

"In connection with the proposed new building recently authorized by Congress for the Department of State, it is the intention of this Department to take up at once the obtaining of data

for

for the designing of the new building for the Department of which you are the head.

"To accomplish this, it is necessary that data be obtained regarding the requirements of the various branches of your Department. May I therefore request that you appoint a time when the Supervising Architect of this Department can confer with you in regard to the preliminary steps to be taken."

I suppose it is the duty of the Supervising Architect's office to get the views of the three Departments and then to call upon several great architects to submit some plans. I suppose what you would wish said at this time is that you would prefer the part of the property farthest back from the Avenue, that you want the building quite separate but lending itself to the general mass of the other two, that you would wish the rooms arranged according to the administrative organization of the Department and with plenty of small rooms for individuals quietly to work. What about a huge hall on the top floor for international conferences, and what about a state dining room and one or two suites so that when a foreign president or prince comes here he can be properly put up instead of sent at great expense to a hotel?

Yesterday I had a long talk with Mr. Hoyt and Mr. Clark about the Charlton case. Apparently it could drag

a year and we have nothing to do with it until ^{the} a New Jersey Court sitting as an extradition magistrate has ordered commitment or release. Their action, however, could be reviewed by Italy ^{is} bringing the case before another extradition court. It could also be reviewed and taken even to the Supreme Court by means of habeas corpus proceedings on the part of the defense. I gather that a final decision by the Supreme Court would rule even if the Department in its single function of determining whether or not a warrant of surrender should ^{sh} issue would have decided its question affirmatively. It seems to be a case between Italy and the defendant in which the extradition magistrate is judge and the Department of State executes the final decision subject to a power to negative its effect by declining to issue a warrant. Mr. Hoyt and I feel that if it ever came to the point we would favor surrender. Mr. Clark is still doubtful. I suppose it will all be threshed out in the courts; but I am afraid Italy may shy at the expense.

Yesterday a typewritten anonymous note came from Baltimore threatening the President's life if Charlton were not given over for ~~imprisonment~~ ^{punishment}, and from Stanford came a pencilled note making the same threat to you and,

evidently.

evidently, written by an illiterate. I sent McKeir to give both to Wilkie. Wilkie said he would communicate with the Stamford police, would have stray people at Cape May observed, and would notify his men at Beverly.

Callan O'Laughlin was here yesterday. He wants to write strongly for intervention in Nicaragua and thinks if done suddenly and effectively public opinion would generally approve. I trust things will drift another month.

How horribly the telephone worked yesterday! I am awfully sorry you are still unable to take sea baths and earnestly hope you are rapidly improving.

Here is another frightfully long letter. My hope has been to confine myself to one letter a week giving a birds eye view of the more important matters. Please give my kindest regards to Mrs. Knox, and believe me always,

Yours very sincerely,

Huntington Wilson.

The Honorable P. C. Knox,

Cape May Hotel,

Cape May, N. J.